

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



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Order Instituting Rulemaking to Consider the
Adoption of a General Order and Procedures to
Implement the Digital Infrastructure and Video
Competition Act of 2006.

R.06-10-005
(Filed October 5, 2006)

**OPENING COMMENTS OF
AT&T CALIFORNIA ON
DRAFT OPINION RESOLVING ISSUES IN PHASE II
(FILED 8/24/07)**

James B. Young
David J. Miller
AT&T Services Legal Department
525 Market Street, Room 2018
San Francisco, CA 94105
Tel: (415) 778-1393
Fax: (281) 664-9478
davidjmiller@att.com

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AT&T California, pursuant to Rule of Practice and Procedure 14.3 of the California Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”), provides the following opening comments on the **Draft Opinion Resolving Issues In Phase II (Filed 8/24/07)** (hereinafter, “Proposed Decision” or “PD”).

I. INTRODUCTION

AT&T California’s comments focus on two legal errors contained within the Proposed Decision: the imposition of two new reporting requirements that plainly contravene the Digital Infrastructure and Video Competition Act of 2006 (“DIVCA” or “the Act”).

DIVCA’s purpose is to create *competition* for video services. The Act finds that “[i]ncreasing competition for video and broadband services is a matter of statewide concern,”¹ because *increasing competition* will: (1) provide consumers with more choice, (2) lower prices, (3) speed the deployment of new communication and broadband technologies, (4) create jobs, (5) benefit the California economy, and (6) increase opportunities for programming that appeals to California’s diverse population and many cultural communities.² Plainly, DIVCA intends to benefit Californians by increasing video *competition*, not increasing video *regulation*.

To this end, DIVCA repeatedly emphasizes that the Commission has very limited authority over video services and video service providers. In two separate provisions, DIVCA clarifies that the Commission’s broader authority over public utilities does not apply to video service providers. Section 5810(a)(3) states that “video service providers *are not public utilities*

¹ Pub. Util. Code § 5810(a)(1) (emphasis added). All code references are to the Public Utilities Code, unless otherwise indicated.

² § 5810(a)(1)(B); § 5810(a)(1)(D).

or common carriers,”³ and section 5820(c) confirms that “[t]he holder of a state [video] franchise *shall not be deemed a public utility* as a result of providing video service....”⁴

Consistent with this intent, the plain and express language of DIVCA carefully limits the Commission’s authority:

Neither the commission nor any local franchising entity or other local entity of the state may ... *impose any requirement* on any holder of a state franchise *except as expressly provided* in [DIVCA].⁵

DIVCA does not expressly provide for the two new reporting requirements contained in the Proposed Decision, thus the Commission may not impose them. DIVCA sections 5920 and 5960 set forth *the* specific reporting requirements authorized by DIVCA, and these new reporting requirements are not among them.

In attempting to justify the additional reporting requirements, the Proposed Decision opines,

We disagree that the imposition of further reporting requirements violates DIVCA. However, we agree generally with the comments of current or potential providers of video programming and broadband services that DIVCA intends video programming and broadband services to be offered in a competitive environment, and that the Commission should avoid imposing additional data requirements that impose a heavy burden on service providers yet do not assist the Commission in carrying out its role.⁶

In other words, the Proposed Decision interprets DIVCA to authorize additional reporting requirements so long as they (1) “assist the Commission” and (2) do not “impose a heavy burden on service providers.” This interpretation completely ignores the intent and express language of DIVCA. Nowhere does DIVCA allow the Commission to impose reporting requirements as long

³ § 5810(a)(3) (emphasis added).

⁴ § 5820(c) (emphasis added).

⁵ § 5840(a) (emphasis added).

⁶ Proposed Decision, p. 22.

as they “assist the Commission” and do not impose “a heavy burden.” To the contrary, DIVCA plainly states that the Commission may not “*impose any requirement on any holder of a state franchise except as expressly provided in [DIVCA].*”⁷

A. Reporting Video Customers By Census Tract

The Proposed Decision would require franchise holders to report the number of households in each Census Tract of its Service Area that subscribe to its video service.⁸ The PD opines this “data will be useful for ensuring enforcement of the nondiscrimination and build-out provisions of Section 5890,”⁹ and more specifically that “video subscriber data will be necessary information for the Commission so that it can determine whether to initiate action on its own motion to enforce Section 5890(a).”¹⁰ Contrary to these claims, this proposed reporting requirement would violate DIVCA and would not assist the Commission in enforcing Section 5890(a).

First, as discussed above, DIVCA does not authorize the Commission to impose any reporting requirements it merely deems to be “useful” or even “necessary” in ensuring enforcement of the Act. Instead, DIVCA expressly prohibits the Commission from “*impos[ing] any requirement on any holder of a state franchise except as expressly provided in [DIVCA].*”¹¹ DIVCA even enumerates the reporting requirements the Commission may impose, and subscriber data is not one of them.¹²

⁷ § 5840(a) (emphasis added).

⁸ Proposed Decision, pp. 37-38 (Ordering Paragraph 2.d).

⁹ Proposed Decision, p. 24.

¹⁰ Proposed Decision, p. 25.

¹¹ § 5840(a) (emphasis added).

¹² §§ 5920, 5960. Precisely this kind of reporting was proposed during DIVCA negotiations in the Legislature last year. Requiring it now—after it was clearly considered and rejected—would unquestionably

Second, the Commission’s authority to regulate public utilities does not allow it to impose a video subscriber reporting requirement, or any other requirement, on video service providers. Again, DIVCA plainly provides that “video service providers *are not public utilities* or common carriers,”¹³ and that “[t]he holder of a state [video] franchise *shall not be deemed a public utility* as a result of providing video service....”¹⁴

Third, contrary to the Proposed Decision’s reasoning, subscriber data by tract are not “necessary information for the Commission so that it can determine whether to initiate action on its own motion to enforce Section 5890(a).”¹⁵ DIVCA prohibits income-based discrimination in offering *access* to potential subscribers, it does not require a certain composition of *actual* subscribers.

Section 5890(a) provides (emphasis added),

A cable operator or video service provider that has been granted a state franchise under this division may not discriminate against or deny *access to service* to any group of *potential* residential subscribers because of the income of the residents in the local area in which the group resides.

The very next subsection, 5890(b), provides that franchise holders such as AT&T meet the requirements of 5890(a) if certain milestones are satisfied¹⁶ regarding the percentage of households “*with access to the holder’s video service.*”¹⁷ The Act defines “access” to mean “that the holder is capable of providing video service at the household address...regardless of whether

undermine legislative intent.

¹³ § 5810(a)(3) (emphasis added).

¹⁴ § 5820(c) (emphasis added).

¹⁵ Proposed Decision, p. 25.

¹⁶ The holder must also meet certain community center requirements. Pub. Util. Code § 5890(b)(3).

¹⁷ Pub. Util. Code § 5890(b)(2) (emphasis added). This provision makes plain that franchise holders have three years to meet DIVCA’s non-discriminatory access requirement. Thus, any related reporting before then is unnecessary.

any customer has ordered service....”¹⁸ Accordingly, DIVCA requires the reporting of the number of households “offered” video service,¹⁹ and the number of low-income households “offered” video service.²⁰ Thus, DIVCA’s plain language makes clear that its non-discrimination requirement applies to “access,” not subscriber composition. Of course this reflects two important realities: (1) no rational new entrant would make the sizable capital investment necessary to provide access to video service in a particular area, and then refuse to sell it; and (2) franchise holders cannot force customers to actually subscribe to their service.

Fourth, it would be particularly inappropriate to require new entrants to report geographically granular subscriber data. Such data are highly proprietary trade secrets. As new entrants sign up customers, the number and location of those customers can easily be used by incumbent competitors to identify a new entrant’s rollout plans. The incumbent can then target promotional offerings and deny the benefits of such offerings to its broader customer base. Even if done on an “aggregated” basis, reporting of such data for geographic areas where there is only one franchise holder would reveal that holder’s detailed subscriber data. Nonetheless, the Proposed Decision only provides that new entrant video subscriber data “may” be accorded proprietary treatment.²¹

Fifth, compliance with the nondiscrimination and build-out requirements of section 5890 is measured at the level of the provider’s entire service area.²² Because the requirements do not

¹⁸ Pub. Util. code § 5890(j)(4).

¹⁹ Pub. Util. Code § 5960(b)(2)(A)(ii).

²⁰ Pub. Util. Code § 5960(b)(3)(ii).

²¹ Proposed Decision, p. 25.

²² Providers are already required to report the total number of video subscribers annually, per G.O. 169. General Order 169, p. 19 (section D(2)).

apply on a census tract basis, the Commission has no need to see subscriber data at the census tract level.

B. Reporting The Type Of Wireless Broadband Technology

The Proposed Decision also would impose the following additional reporting requirement:

The subscriber data relating to non-wireline Broadband shall indicate whether the subscription is for a data-enabled cellular phone, PDA or other wireless hand-held device, or whether the subscription is for the use of a wireless data card.²³

This additional reporting requirement would violate DIVCA, and would not provide the Commission with meaningful data.

As indicated above, DIVCA expressly prohibits the Commission from imposing “*any requirement* on any holder of a state franchise *except as expressly provided* in [DIVCA].”²⁴

DIVCA does not expressly provide that franchise holders are required to report the type of non-wireline broadband technology used. In fact, DIVCA provides the opposite. On the issue of non-wireline technology, DIVCA requires only the reporting of “[w]hether the broadband provided by the holder utilizes wireline-based facilities *or another technology*.”²⁵

Moreover, the data that would be reported would not be meaningful. The Proposed Decision’s rationale for requiring this data is as follows:

We believe areas currently unserved or underserved by broadband at this point will likely be rural areas, or other areas that are high cost due to distance, terrain, demographics and density issues. It is thus important that the Commission gather data that will help us understand *the extent to which wireless broadband is*

²³ Proposed Decision, p. 36 (Ordering Paragraph 2.c).

²⁴ § 5840(a) (emphasis added).

²⁵ § 5960(b)(1)(C) (emphasis added).

*reaching these difficult-to-serve areas, and the degree to which consumers view these services as a means to satisfy their on-line needs.*²⁶

However, AT&T has already provided the Commission with information that readily identifies where wireless broadband is available, including rural or underserved areas. Specifically, AT&T has provided digital maps showing where wireless broadband has been deployed and is commercially available to end users, and AT&T will continue to provide this information on an annual basis. It is this information, not details about specific devices, that shows where “wireless broadband is reaching.” Specific device details are not meaningful because by their very nature, wireless hand-held devices and data cards are mobile—they can be used in different places at different times—and they cannot be pinned down to specific geographic areas.

Moreover, whether the device used is “hand-held” or a data card would not reveal “the degree to which consumers view these services as a means to satisfy their on-line needs.” Although it appears the Commission believes data cards are more likely to satisfy a customer’s needs, hand-held devices are used more-and-more for general internet access, web browsing and applications such as email, which were once available only through computers. Devices are evolving rapidly to provide ever-greater speed, capacity and capabilities. The small form factor and mobility of handhelds can in many instances provide easier and more convenient access to information that consumers want or need than laptops or fixed broadband—email, stock quotes, news clips, web searches, etc.

Additionally, carriers and application and content providers are working together to provide online shopping and mobile payments from devices. By 2011, the total transaction value of mobile payments is forecast to reach \$22 billion world-wide, according to Juniper Research, up from just \$2 billion at the end of 2007. Similarly, the proliferation of camera and video

²⁶ Proposed Decision, p. 23 (emphasis added; citations omitted).

phones combined with broadband capabilities provide consumers access to a myriad of video and photography services they want that are not provided through laptops (or cards).

Finally, hand-helds can even be “tethered” to a computer (via a USB cable or other means) to provide that computer with broadband internet access. Thus, whether a consumer has a hand-held device or a data card would not reveal any reliable evidence regarding the degree to which those services satisfy a customer’s on-line “needs”—whatever those may be. Presumably, consumers would not purchase any of these services unless they found them useful.

II. CONCLUSION

As set forth above, AT&T California requests the Proposed Decision be revised to comply with DIVCA by not imposing additional requirements to report subscriber data by census tract or the type of wireless broadband technology used.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

James B. Young
David J. Miller
AT&T Services Legal Department
525 Market Street, Room 2018
San Francisco, CA 94105
Tel: (415) 778-1393
Fax: (281) 664-9478
davidjmiller@att.com

DATED: September 13, 2007

Appendix A: AT&T California's Recommended Revisions to Proposed Decision's Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

Findings of Fact

1. The case-by-case compliance mechanism is an application including a plan in which the franchise holder would justify the reasonableness of its development efforts based on the circumstances peculiar to its service area.

2. GO 169 contains a suitable case-by-case compliance mechanism. The additional guidance set forth below follows closely from Pub. Util. Code § 5890. First, the company-specific application shall contain clearly stated build-out milestones that demonstrate a serious and realistic planning effort by the state video franchise holder. Second, the company-specific application shall clearly state the constraints affecting the applicant's build-out, with particular attention to the types of constraints noted in DIVCA itself.

~~3. Periodic reporting by state video franchise holders provides important information to the Commission that it uses in fulfilling its roles under DIVCA regarding broadband deployment in California and enforcing DIVCA's non-discrimination and build-out requirements.~~

~~4. Reporting of customers' means of access to wireless broadband will further the legislative intent to monitor the penetration of broadband services, especially to unserved or underserved areas within the State.~~

~~5. Reporting by a state video franchise holder of the number of its video customers by census tract, in addition to the number of households that are offered video service, will provide necessary information to the Commission in enforcing the non-discrimination requirements of Pub. Util. Code § 5890(a).~~

~~6~~3. Through oversight, GO 169 failed to include the requirement that a state video franchise holder give notice to incumbent cable operators of the holder's imminent market entry.

~~7~~4. The Commission should adopt renewal rules a reasonable time before current state video franchises begin to expire in 2017.

Appendix A: AT&T California's Recommended Revisions to Proposed Decision's Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

85. The Commission should institute a rulemaking no later than April 2011, or such earlier time as the matter may be deemed ripe, to adopt principles and policies regarding state video franchise renewals. Any interested person, under Pub. Util. Code § 1708.5(f), may petition the Commission at any time to adopt a regulation pertaining state video franchise renewals. The petition should cite this decision and discuss with specificity the developments, such as changes of law or other occurrences, that cause the renewal issue to be ripe for determination by the Commission.

Conclusions of Law

1. DIVCA requires that state video franchise holders actively develop their franchise.
2. DIVCA requires state video franchise holders to provide non-discriminatory access to their video service.
3. DIVCA gives smaller state video franchise holders flexibility in how they demonstrate compliance with the non-discrimination and build-out requirements of Pub. Util. Code § 5890.
4. The flexibility that the Legislature intended in DIVCA for the smaller telephone companies in demonstrating compliance with DIVCA's non-discrimination and build-out requirements is set forth within the four corners of the statute.
5. Pub. Util. Code § 5890(c) does not mandate or authorize after-the-fact reasonableness review.
6. Pub. Util. Code § 5890(b), regarding non-discriminatory service to low-income households, should apply to smaller state video franchise holders. Some franchise holders may find difficulty complying if the proportion of low-income households in the holder's service area is relatively low. In such cases, the franchise holder should demonstrate that the percent of low-income households in

Appendix A: AT&T California's Recommended Revisions to Proposed Decision's Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

its service area to which it provides access to video service correlates closely to the percent of all households provided access.

~~7. The Commission has authority to take actions necessary to carry out its duties under DIVCA, and to that end the Commission may impose additional reporting requirements beyond those set forth in DIVCA.~~

87. To the extent that information contained in a report submitted to the Commission pursuant to its video franchise program contains competitively sensitive information, the state video franchise holder submitting the report may request confidential treatment, as provided by Pub. Util. Code § 5960(d).

98. DIVCA enlarges the Commission's complaint jurisdiction by directing the Commission to hear a complaint brought by a local government against a state video franchise holder, even though the latter, by express provision of DIVCA, is not a public utility.

109. Ordering Paragraph 25 of D.07-03-014 states: "No party shall be awarded intervenor compensation in a proceeding arising under DIVCA." This DIVCA rulemaking itself falls within the broad ambit of the holding in Ordering Paragraph 25. Therefore, the pending NOIs and TURN's request for compensation should also be rejected.

110. Today's order should be made effective immediately.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served a copy of the **OPENING COMMENTS OF AT&T CALIFORNIA ON DRAFT OPINION RESOLVING ISSUES IN PHASE II (FILED 8/24/07)** in **R.06-10-005** by electronic mail, hand-delivery and/or by mailing a properly addressed copy by first-class mail with postage prepaid to each party named in the official service list for whom an e-mail address has not been posted on the commission's web site.

Executed this 13th day of September, 2007 at San Francisco, California.

AT&T CALIFORNIA
525 Market Street, 20th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105

/s/
Agnes Ng

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Service Lists

Proceeding: R0610005 - CPUC - CABLE TELEVIS

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Parties

WILLIAM H. WEBER
ATTORNEY AT LAW
CBeyond COMMUNICATIONS
320 INTERSTATE NORTH PARKWAY
ATLANTA, GA 30339

ANN JOHNSON
VERIZON
HQE02F61
600 HIDDEN RIDGE
IRVING, TX 75038

DAVID C. RODRIGUEZ
STRATEGIC COUNSEL
523 WEST SIXTH STREET, SUITE 1128
LOS ANGELES, CA 90014

MAGGLE HEALY
CITY OF REDONDO BEACH
415 DIAMOND STREET
REDONDO BEACH, CA 90277

GERALD R. MILLER
CITY OF LONG BEACH
333 WEST OCEAN BLVD.
LONG BEACH, CA 90802

TRACEY L. HAUSE
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIRECTOR
CITY OF ARCADIA
240 W. HUNTINGTON DRIVE
ARCADIA, CA 91007

CYNTHIA J. KURTZ
CITY MANAGER
CITY OF PASADENA
117 E. COLORADO BLVD., 6TH FLOOR
PASADENA, CA 91105

ROB WISHNER
CITY OF WALNUT
21201 LA PUENTE ROAD
WALNUT, CA 91789

ESTHER NORTHRUP
COX CALIFORNIA TELCOM, LLC
5159 FEDERAL BLVD.
SAN DIEGO, CA 92105

BILL NUSBAUM
THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK
711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 350
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

ELAINE M. DUNCAN
ATTORNEY AT LAW
VERIZON
711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 300
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

REGINA COSTA
THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK
711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 350
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

BARRY FRASER
CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
875 STEVENSON STREET, 5TH FLOOR
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103

WILLIAM L. LOWERY
MILLER & VAN EATON, LLP
400 MONTGOMERY ST., SUITE 501
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103

WILLIAM L. LOWERY
MILLER & VAN EATON, LLP
580 CALIFORNIA STREET, SUITE 1600
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94104

DAVID J. MILLER
ATTORNEY AT LAW
AT&T CALIFORNIA
525 MARKET STREET, ROOM 2018
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

FASSIL FENIKILE
AT&T CALIFORNIA
525 MARKET STREET, ROOM 1925
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

SYREETA GIBBS
AT&T CALIFORNIA
525 MARKET STREET, 19TH FLOOR
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

TOM SELHORST
AT&T CALIFORNIA
525 MARKET STREET, 2023
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

ENRIQUE GALLARDO
LATINO ISSUES FORUM
160 PINE STREET, SUITE 700
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

MARK P. SCHREIBER
ATTORNEY AT LAW
COOPER, WHITE & COOPER, LLP
201 CALIFORNIA STREET, 17TH FLOOR
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

PATRICK M. ROSVALL
ATTORNEY AT LAW
COOPER, WHITE & COOPER LLP
201 CALIFORNIA STREET, 17TH FLOOR
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

SEAN P. BEATTY
ATTORNEY AT LAW
COOPER, WHITE & COOPER, LLP
201 CALIFORNIA ST., 17TH FLOOR
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

ALLEN S. HAMMOND, IV
PROFESSOR OF LAW
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
500 EL CAMINO REAL
SANTA CLARA, CA 94305

ALEXIS K. WODTKE
STAFF ATTORNEY
CONSUMER FEDERATION OF CALIFORNIA
520 S. EL CAMINO REAL, STE. 340
SAN MATEO, CA 94402

ANITA C. TAFF-RICE
ATTORNEY AT LAW
1547 PALOS VERDES MALL, SUITE 298
WALNUT CREEK, CA 94597

DOUGLAS GARRETT
COX COMMUNICATIONS
2200 POWELL STREET, STE. 1035
EMERYVILLE, CA 94608

IZETTA C.R. JACKSON
OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY
CITY OF OAKLAND
1 FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA, 10TH FLR.
OAKLAND, CA 94612

LESLA LEHTONEN
VP LEGAL & REGULATORY AFFAIRS
CALIFORNIA CABLE TELEVISION ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION
360 22ND STREET, NO. 750
OAKLAND, CA 94612

MARIA POLITZER
LEGAL DEPARTMENT ASSOCIATE
CALIFORNIA CABLE TELEVISION
ASSOCIATION
360 22ND STREET, NO. 750
OAKLAND, CA 94612

KENECHUKWU OKOCHA
THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE
1918 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, 2ND FLOOR
BERKELEY, CA 94704

MARK RUTLEDGE
TELECOMMUNICATIONS FELLOW
THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE
1918 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SECOND FLR.
BERKELEY, CA 94704

PHILIP KAMLAZ
CITY OF BERKELEY
2180 MILVIA STREET
BERKELEY, CA 94704

ROBERT GNAIZDA
POLICY DIRECTOR/GENERAL COUNSEL
THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE
1918 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SECOND FLOOR
BERKELEY, CA 94704

THALIA N.C. GONZALEZ
LEGAL COUNSEL
THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE
1918 UNIVERSITY AVE., 2ND FLOOR
BERKELEY, CA 94704

WILLIAM HUGHES
ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY
CITY OF SAN JOSE
16TH FLOOR
200 EAST SANTA CLARA STREET
SAN JOSE, CA 95113-1900

GREG R. GIERCZAK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SURE WEST TELEPHONE
PO BOX 969
200 VERNON STREET
ROSEVILLE, CA 95678

PATRICK WHITNELL
1400 K STREET, 4TH FLOOR
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

MARIE C. MALLIETT
THE COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA
2870 GATEWAY OAKS DRIVE, SUITE 100
SACRAMENTO, CA 95833-3509

Information Only

KEVIN SAVILLE
ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL
CITIZENS/FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS
2378 WILSHIRE BLVD.
MOUND, MN 55364

GREGORY T. DIAMOND
7901 LOWRY BLVD.
DENVER, CO 80230

ALOA STEVENS
DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT&EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS
PO BOX 708970
SANDY, UT 84070-8970

LONNIE ELDRIDGE
DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEY
CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
CITY HALL EAST, SUITE 700
200 N. MAIN STREET
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

RICHARD CHABRAN
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY POLICY
1000 ALAMEDA STREET, SUITE 240
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

ROY MORALES
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST
CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CITY HALL
200 N. SPRING STREET, 2ND FLOOR
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

WILLIAM IMPERIAL
TELECOMMUNICATIONS REG. OFFICER
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AGENCY
CITY HALL EAST, ROOM 1255
200 N. MAIN STREET
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

GREG FUENTES
11041 SANTA MONICA BLVD., NO.629
LOS ANGELES, CA 90025

JONATHAN L. KRAMER
ATTORNEY AT LAW
KRAMER TELECOM LAW FIRM
2001 S. BARRINGTON AVE., SUITE 306
LOS ANGELES, CA 90025

MICHAEL J. FRIEDMAN
VICE PRESIDENT
TELECOMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT CORP.
5757 WILSHIRE BLVD., SUITE 635
LOS ANGELES, CA 90036

ANDRES F. IRLANDO
VICE PRESIDENT
VERIZON CALIFORNIA, INC.
112 LAKEVIEW CANYON ROAD
THOUSAND OAKS, CA 91362

STEVEN LASTOMIRSKY
DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEY
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
1200 THIRD AVENUE, 11TH FLOOR
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

SUSAN WILSON
DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEY
RIVERSIDE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
3900 MAIN STREET, 5TH FLOOR
RIVERSIDE, CA 92522

AARON C. HARP
OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY
CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH
3300 NEWPORT BLVD
NEWPORT BEACH, CA 92658-8915

CHRISTINE MAILLOUX
ATTORNEY AT LAW
THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK
711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 350
234
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

WILLIAM K. SANDERS
DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEY
OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY
1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE, ROOM
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-4682

MALCOLM YEUNG
STAFF ATTORNEY
ASIAN LAW CAUCUS
939 MARKET ST., SUITE 201
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103

RANDLOPH W. DEUTSCH
SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP
555 CALIFORNIA STREET, SUITE 2000
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94104

GREG STEPHANICICH
RICHARDS, WATSON & GERSHON
44 MONTGOMERY STREET, SUITE 3800
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94104-4811

RHONDA J. JOHNSON
VP-REGULATORY AFFAIRS
AT&T CALIFORNIA
525 MARKET STREET, ROOM 1923
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

MARGARET L. TOBIAS
TOBIAS LAW OFFICE
460 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

PETER A. CASCIATO
A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION
355 BRYANT STREET, SUITE 410
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

NOEL GIELEGHEM
COOPER, WHITE & COOPER LLP
201 CALIFORNIA ST. 17TH FLOOR
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

JOSE E. GUZMAN, JR.
NOSSAMAN GUTHNER KNOX & ELLIOTT LLP
50 CALIFORNIA STREET, 34TH FLOOR
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111-4799

KATIE NELSON
DAVIS WRIGHT TREMAINE, LLP
505 MONTGOMERY STREET, SUITE 800
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111-6533

GRANT GUERRA
PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY
PO BOX 7442
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94120-7442

GRANT KOLLING
SENIOR ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY
CITY OF PALO ALTO
250 HAMILTON AVENUE, 8TH FLOOR
PALO ALTO, CA 94301

DAVID HANKIN
ASTOUND BROADBAND, LLC
1400 FASHION ISLAND BLVD., SUITE 100
SAN MATEO, CA 94404

MARK T. BOEHME
ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY
CITY OF CONCORD
1950 PARKSIDE DRIVE
CONCORD, CA 94510

PETER DRAGOVICH
ASSISTANT TO THE CITY MANAGER
CITY OF CONCORD
1950 PARKSIDE DRIVE, MS 01/A
CONCORD, CA 94519

BOBAK ROSHAN
LEGAL ASSOCIATE
THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE
1918 UNIVERSITY STREET, 2ND FLOOR
BERKELEY, CA 94704

STEPHANIE CHEN
LEGAL ASSOCIATE
THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE
1918 UNIVERSITY STREET, 2ND FLOOR
BERKELEY, CA 94704

SCOTT MCKOWN
C/O CONT OF MARIN ISTD
MARIN TELECOMMUNICATION AGENCY
371 BEL MARIN KEYS BOULEVARD
NOVATO, CA 94941

BARRY F. MCCARTHY, ESQ.
ATTORNEY AT LAW
MCCARTHY & BARRY LLP
100 PARK CENTER PLAZA, SUITE 501
SAN JOSE, CA 95113

TIM HOLDEN
SIERRA NEVADA COMMUNICATIONS
AFFAIRS
PO BOX 281
STANDARD, CA 95373

CHARLES BORN
MANAGER, GOVERNMENT & EXTERNAL
FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS OF CALIFORNIA
9260 E. STOCKTON BLVD.
ELK GROVE, CA 95624

JOE CHICOINE
MANAGER, STATE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS
PO BOX 340
ELK GROVE, CA 95759

KELLY E. BOYD
NOSSAMAN, GUTHNER, KNOX AND ELLIOTT
915 L STREET, SUITE 1000
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

ROBERT A. RYAN
COUNTY COUNSEL
COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
700 H STREET, SUITE 2650
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

SUE BUSKE
THE BUSKE GROUP
3001 J STREET, SUITE 201
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816

State Service

ALIK LEE
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
TELECOMMUNICATIONS & CONSUMER ISSUES BRA
ROOM 4101
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

APRIL MULQUEEN
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
DIVISION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING
ROOM 5119
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

JANE WHANG
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
LEGAL DIVISION
ROOM 5029
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

LILY CHOW
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
POLICY & DECISION ANALYSIS BRANCH
AREA 3-F
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

MICHAEL MORRIS
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
POLICY & DECISION ANALYSIS BRANCH
BRA
AREA 3-F
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

ROBERT LEHMAN
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
TELECOMMUNICATIONS & CONSUMER ISSUES
ROOM 4102
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

SINDY J. YUN
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
LEGAL DIVISION
ROOM 4300
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

STEVEN KOTZ
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES
ROOM 2251
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

TIMOTHY J. SULLIVAN
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
EXECUTIVE DIVISION
ROOM 5212
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

WILLIAM JOHNSTON
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
POLICY & DECISION ANALYSIS BRANCH
AREA 3-F
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

DELANEY HUNTER
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
EXECUTIVE DIVISION
COMMERC
770 L STREET, SUITE 1050
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

EDWARD RANDOLPH
ASM LEVINE'S OFFICE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE/UTILITIES AND
STATE CAPITOL ROOM 5136
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

RANDY CHINN
SENATE ENERGY UTILITIES & COMMUNICATIONS
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 4038
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

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